

Council on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

MINUTES

MAY 9, 2013

10:00AM – 4:00PM

1 WEST WILSON, MADISON

MEETING CALLED BY	Billy Mauldin
PRESENT	Gary Ebben, Nicole Everson, Tracy Haas, Deborah Herczog, Denise Johnson, Billy Mauldin, Alex Slappey, Steve Smart, Justin Vollmar
ODHH STAFF PRESENT	Linda Huffer, Melani Kaplan
ABSENT	Mary Jane Griffin
INTERPRETERS	Amber Mullet, Debra Gorra Barash
CAPTIONIST	Rose Coulthart

Meeting called to order at 10:11 a.m. by Billy Mauldin, Chair.

Agenda topics

COUNCIL MEMBERS INTRODUCTION & APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

DISCUSSION		
Deborah Herczog – New Council Member (Hard of Hearing) introduced herself. Deborah is a nurse practitioner and late-deafened.		
Approval of Meeting Minutes.		
Denise Johnson motioned that the March meeting minutes are approved. Steve Smart seconded. Motion passed unanimously.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
None		

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DISCUSSION	* Report delivered by Melani Kaplan on Linda's behalf due to her late arrival as the result of an emergency situation.
Mental Health & Substance Abuse Steering Committee Update – <ul style="list-style-type: none">A toolkit teaching mental health and substance abuse professionals about the unique needs of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind consumers. It is expected to be completed by the Fall.In partnership with InHealth at Rogers Hospital, the committee is starting a video project aimed at removing the stigma against mental health and substance abuse issues. They will be creating short videos of people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and living with such issues. These videos will be shared online for the general public to help inform them about the experiences of the community members. It is expected to have several	

videos completed and on the website by the Fall.

- Committee members are planning community informational sessions throughout the state to educate the Deaf community about mental health and substance abuse. These sessions will occur in September.
- The committee is also looking to establish a strong website to communicate with the community and with professionals about their work. That is still in progress.

Signs at the Zoo – This program will take place at the Henry Vilas Zoo on Saturday, September 14th 10:00am – 2:00pm. The search for volunteers continues and the agenda of events is being set. Some sponsorships will be needed to support some of the basics of the event such as t-shirts for the volunteers and supplies.

ODHH Updates –

- The ODHH fiscal year ends as of June 30th. July 1st will mark the beginning of the next fiscal year and budget.
- ODHH added a new Vlog to caution the community about fundraising scams after the Boston bombing.
- All ODHH staff will be presenting during the upcoming Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD) Conference in Middleton on Friday, June 28th. Jennifer Koehn, the Deaf Disability Benefits Specialist, may not be able to join staff due to maternity leave. Each staff member will update the attendees on projects and work they have accomplished thus far.

HIV/AIDS Education – Bette Mentz-Powell, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist for the southwestern region of Wisconsin, and ODHH staff interpreter, Amber Mullett, were successful in facilitating a \$5,000 grant for HIV education to LGBT youth for the Wisconsin Rainbow Alliance for the Deaf.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Inmates and the Department of Corrections – Bette Mentz-Powell is working with the Department of Corrections on a pilot program to install Video Phones (VPs) for Deaf inmates.

FEMA Grant and Partnership with WAD – ODHH wrote a grant in partnership with the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD) for \$35,000 to create a project that would help the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind community in Wisconsin to be better prepared for a disaster. It will consist of a manual with checklists and ASL videos explaining steps they can take to protect themselves. This information, once created, will be shared with community members during informational sessions. This project is headed by Tom Benziger, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in the Southeast region.

Hospital Toolkit – Shawnee Thomas, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in the Northern region, is working on a toolkit for patients who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind in hospitals or nursing homes. There will be three versions of the kit to match the varying needs of each category. Shawnee is working with

various partners representing hospitals and key stakeholders to maximize the effectiveness of the toolkits. Linda will be helping to work on finding funding for this project.

Job Development – Nancy Harbison, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in the Northeastern region, is in the exploration and research phase on how to help individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind to find employment.

Wisconsin Rights and Resources Handbook – Carolyn Small, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in the Northwestern region, is working on updating the Wisconsin Rights and Resources Handbook, which was last updated in 2008.

Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) – ODHH, with the help of an advisory committee, revamped the assessment process for new interpreters. The new process is more current in its assessment, training for evaluators, scoring process and feedback for improvement.

Deaf Awareness Month – The art display was a success with strong participation from Wisconsin artists and Wisconsin School for the Deaf. Part of this display was a part of the Bring Your Daughters and Sons to work day for the Department of Health. The interest generated by this event was successful enough that it will be continued next year.

Better Speech and Hearing Month – The Madison chapter of HLAA created a display in the cabinet on the first floor of the DHS building in honor of Better Speech and Hearing Month.

SPECIAL GUEST PRESENTATION

DISCUSSION	Jim Schumacher from Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
<p>Jim Schumacher is a supervisor for DVR and is here to answer questions with the Council regarding DVR services provision to people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind.</p> <p>In response to funding shortfalls, DVR developed an order of selection for priority listing on the wait list based on limitations in seven (7) functional areas. Listed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobility – does your disability make it difficult to get to and from various places? 2. Communication – does your disability make it difficult to communicate? 3. Self-Care – does your disability make it difficult for you tend to your personal needs to get ready for work or while you are at work? 4. Self-Direction – does your disability make it difficult for you to make realistic plans or decisions, or to follow through with your plans? 5. Interpersonal Skills – does your disability make it difficult for you to get along with others at work? 6. Work Tolerance – does your disability make it difficult for you to perform all 	

the physical disabilities of most jobs?

7. Work Acceptance – does your disability make it difficult for you to learn new jobs and skills?

Counselors then decide, with documentation of medical records, whether or not to move forward. Consumers are categorized by level of severity of functional limitations.

Category One – the consumer has severe limitations in four (4) or more of the 7 functional limitations. They begin receiving services immediately.

Category Two – the consumer has severe limitations in three (3) or less of the 7 functional limitations. They are put on a wait list and may not begin to receive services until four to six months later.

The process for Order of Selection is mandated by Federal law in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Questions from Council Members and Answers:

Q: How are DVR counselors trained to work with the various disabilities, make decisions that they can help and decide how to help?

A: DVR counselors expect to partner with the clients. They depend on the clients to fully share the specifics of their disability, what they can and cannot do. They then turn to their resources to work on solving the problem or finding answers.

Q: How are clients supposed to know what they need or what will help them in a work setting or what kind of job to look for?

A: DVR Counselors are trained to assess clients' backgrounds such as work history, hobbies, interests, strengths in education, abilities, skills, areas of strengths and weaknesses. They then encourage clients to find jobs that match their skills and interests. They also encourage clients to do informational interviews, meet people in fields of their interest and explore their interests.

Q: Consumers who are Deaf are giving feedback to ODHH that they are experiencing difficulty communicating with DVR counselors who do not understand ASL or issues impacting people who are Deaf, and placing clients into jobs that are not a match. What is DVR doing about this?

A: The number of clients who were Deaf is not sufficient to support specialty areas, thus DVR has moved to a generalist approach to assigning case loads. In an effort to develop staff capacity to serve clients, they have formed a Sensibilities Work Group that is composed of a representative from each DVR office to meet and share information about hearing and vision impairments. Communication is a two-way street. It is the responsibility of the client to communicate what they need and expect from DVR and the difficulties they encounter.

Q: If a client is self-advocating and still feeling that their DVR counselor is

not understanding their needs or providing the services they need, what should they do and who should they complaint to that will understand?

A: If there is an issue, the client may go to their DVR counselor's supervisor. That supervisor may encourage the client to communicate their concerns with the counselor to give them an opportunity to learn and address those concerns. If the client requests to work with a different counselor, the supervisor will reassign the case to another. It is still important for the client to communicate their needs to their counselor.

Q: What about the barriers that occur when DVR counselors do not understand the Deaf Culture of their clients? It's not as simple as just hiring an interpreter.

A: (From Jim) Please explain what barriers occur?

A: (From Council Members) Barriers in services to clients who are culturally Deaf occur when you have counselors who are not familiar with Deaf Culture, ASL, or even how to work with sign language interpreters. People who experience misunderstandings and barriers in life and then experience these same barriers in the DVR system will shut down and not seek help or restitution within the DVR system as they have historically seen that it has not effected change. Difficulties lie in expecting a culturally Deaf person to explain the complexities of their needs and to self-advocate with service providers who have none of the understanding or awareness. Attitudinal barriers exist within DVR counselors who do not see the level of ability of their clients who are Deaf: e.g. placing a client who is Deaf and holds a master's degree for a job at McDonalds.

Q: How are DVR counselors assigned clients?

A: On a rotating basis. The next available counselor receives the next client.

Q: What cultural sensitivity training is provided to DVR counselors and where are they getting this training?

A: There was a four-week summer training in Oregon that used to be provided to those who wanted it, but it is unsure if this is still available.

Q: What background of knowledge or training is required for newly hired DVR counselors?

A: They are expected to know a little bit about all the various disabilities?

Q: Where do they learn a little bit about all the various disabilities?

A: Most of the applicants for this position have studied rehabilitation at UW-Madison. A master's level program is also available at UW-Stought that provides a class on how various disabilities impact employment. They develop an appreciation for how a person's disability might impact their functioning and how that might impact the ability to get a job, keep a job, or to advance in employment. There are so many different disabilities to learn about.

Q: Most of the trainings do not address or provide any real understanding on the impact of hearing loss. Given this fact, how are DVR counselors able to accurately screen or make an informed decision about how to serve this person if they do not really know about it?

A: DVR counselors depend on their clients to help them understand the difficulties they encounter with communication, in daily life and in their work life.

Q: Is it possible to alter the process of assigning new clients on a rotating basis to allow clients who are Deaf to be assigned to DVR counselors who better understand the unique issues related to their disability? And can how can we start a dialogue to improve the experiences of clients who are Deaf so they don't give up and stay engaged with the DVR system?

A: There can be some flexibility. Clients can request a specific DVR counselor that they feel more comfortable with.

Q: Inclusion as a policy for dealing with all persons with disabilities is an automatic systematic failure for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind. The nature of hearing loss impacts communication. This communication barrier is not a barrier for most of the other classifications of disability. Therefore, the barriers to the DVR system occur from the very beginning. Is DVR open to starting a dialogue on how to better provide services for clients who experience such barriers? Is it a possibility to pursue hiring Deaf DVR counselors who can work with these clients, thus possibly removing some of the barriers?

A: While I do not have the authority to speak for DVR on this matter, I can bring it to John Howe, the Client Services Director, who is in charge of overseeing how DVR provides services to their clients. Part of the issue is that it could be difficult to have one or two or three or four specialist providing services to clients who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and are spread out over large areas.

Council Members thank Jim Schumacher for his time and for helping them to better understand the DVR system.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
None		

OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION
Legal Liaison Position – This is about the formation of a new position that would serve as an equal communication access liaison for people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind and the legal system. The position would work with the

courts and attorneys to ensure that equal access is provided from the beginning of any interactions with the courts all the way to ensuring that court-ordered actions are accessible as well. The subcommittee met to develop their plan and next steps. They will be developing a specific job outline of responsibilities, duties, qualifications and estimated budget for the position. Once they have the basic draft of the specifics, it will be forwarded to the other Council members for review and then search for legislative support. They will also be looking for members of the community who can help move the project forward to join the subcommittee. Denise Johnson will also be researching other states to see if there is a similar position existing elsewhere.

License Plate – Due to the considerable expense and time expended before any money would be made, the Council unanimously voted to not pursue this idea any further.

Visor Card – Per his discussion with Melani Kaplan, Lieutenant Paul Wolfe will be the point of contact for the Wisconsin State Patrol to oversee whether or not they would support the Visor Card. Funding will need to be found. Tracy Haas has volunteered her husband to design the card at no expense to the Council. ODHH regional staff would be able to use this visor card to provide training to the police and the community about how to use it. A possible point of distribution could be in Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) buildings where drivers can take one with them as needed. HLAA and WAD would be other possible partners in distributing to people who are Hard of Hearing or Deaf. Motion made by Justin Vollmar that the Council takes on the visor card as a project. Motion seconded by Nicole Everson and passed unanimously. Tracy Haas and Gary Ebben will work on the final draft; share it with Council members for their review. Then ODHH will work to get it approved within the Department of Health Services and the official endorsement from the Wisconsin State Patrol.

Deaf Child Bill of Rights – Motion for this topic to be discussed by the Council has been withdrawn by Justin Vollmar.

Council Website – This item was continued from last meeting. [With the recent changes to the Council website, members would like to use the website to better reach out to the community. Options were discussed to include an electronic brochure about the Council, announcements about community events and actions. While the Council doesn't have a staff to monitor an open comments section on the website, a section of the site could invite visitors to submit an email response to the question: "Is there a specific program or project you would like the Council to consider?" It would include a note to those submitting a comment that they should not expect a response. Before this change is deployed for public view, Melani Kaplan will submit a draft of the page with the comment invitation to the members for approval.]

Mental Health – The finance committee of the state legislature is meeting to determine their budget for mental health services. Denise Johnson will compose a letter on the Council's behalf to encourage that funds be directed to improve access for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind.

DSPS Website & Interpreter Licensure – This item was continued from last meeting. [The DSPS website that oversees the Interpreter Licensure is currently

difficult to navigate and not deaf-friendly, per complaints from the community. Motion proposed by Gary Ebben that the Council compose a letter to DSPS asking that they make the interpreter licensure section of their website easier to access and more deaf friendly. Denise Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Motion proposed by Steve Smart that the letter to DSPS is shared with SLIC, WisRID, WAD and posted on the Council website for them to follow suit. Billy Mauldin seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.]

Video Remote Interpreting – This item was continued from last meeting. [Hiring entities and businesses are using Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) as a way to circumvent the state interpreter licensure. By using VRI interpreters from out of state, those interpreters may not meet the minimum standards set forth by state law. Motion made by Steve Smart that the Council writes a letter to DSPS in support of the state law that interpreters providing VRI services meet the same licensure requirements or equivalent as those who are physically within the state of Wisconsin. Motion seconded by Tracy Haas. Motion passed unanimously.]

HCAA, Telecoils and Loops – Deborah Herczog will be looking into what the Council can do to support Hard of Hearing issues in Wisconsin with loops, audiologists and telecoils.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Legal Liaison Position: 1: research possible similar positions in other states 2: subcommittee to continue to meet to further the project	1: Denise Johnson 2: All subcommittee members	9/19
Visor Card: design the visor card and assess the wording.	Tracy Haas and Gary Ebben	9/19
Council Website: design feature on Council website for their vote of approval	Melani Kaplan	9/19
Mental Health Letter: letter asking for some of the new mental health budget be directed for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind	Denise Johnson	ASAP
DSPS Letter: Create draft of letter to DSPS asking them to improve navigability and equal communication accessibility to the Interpreter Licensure section of their website, including ASL Vlogs. Send copy of the letter to DSPS to SLIC, WisRID, WAD, asking them to do the same if they agree that this is an issue. Once this letter has been composed and sent, add to Council website with note to the community.	Billy Mauldin and Melani Kaplan	ASAP
VRI Letter: Compose a letter to DSPS in support of the state law that interpreters providing VRI services meet the same licensure	Steve Smart	ASAP

requirements or equivalent as those who are physically within the state of Wisconsin.		
---	--	--

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) – Council members discussed their thoughts on the information shared by the special guest, Jim Schumacher from DVR. An example of how the random pairing of DVR counselors with clients and how it can set up a barrier in the beginning was the pairing of a counselor with a very thick accent for a client who is severely hard of hearing. The struggle for someone who has a hearing loss to understand the accent sets up an immediate issue for the client. Justin Vollmar made a motion that the Council composes a letter thanking Jim for coming to the meeting and reiterating concerns about DVR services for consumers who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and cc the letter to John Howe and Mike Grecko. Motion seconded by Nicole Everson and passed unanimously. Nicole will begin the initial composition of the letter and send to Council members for their feedback.

WSD Council Update – Alex Slappey updated Council members on the activities and goals of the Wisconsin School for the Deaf Council.

Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) – Denise Johnson made a motion draft a letter to PAIMI in support of the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness. Motion seconded by Tracy Haas. Motion passed by majority.

Council Communication: Melani will investigate the possibility of a SharePoint webpage to help Council members communicate with each other and vote, etc.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
DVR Letter: Write letter to Jim Schumacher, including John Howe and Mike Grecko, at DVR.	Nicole Everson	ASAP
PAIMI Letter: Write letter to PAIMI in support of protection and advocacy for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and mental illness.	Denise Johnson	ASAP
SharePoint: Investigate SharePoint as an option for Council members.	Melani Kaplan	9/19

Next Meetings – 2013 meetings: September 19th, December 6th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISCUSSION

Billy Mauldin's and Mary Jane Griffin's terms as Council members will lapse as of July 1st. They will stay on in their roles until they are replaced by the Governor's Office. We thank them for their service to the state of Wisconsin.

Nicole Everson is the chair for Wisconsin Look, a walk on the lakefront in Milwaukee to raise funds for the cure to vision issues.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm by Billy Mauldin, Chair.